



MEET THE
UNEXPECTED
Buffalo



**2019
BUSINESS
PLAN**

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON NOVEMBER 7, 2018

About Visit Buffalo Niagara

Visit Buffalo Niagara is the official and accredited destination marketing organization for Erie County, the City of Buffalo and its incorporated cities, towns and villages. As the primary programmatic arm for Buffalo Niagara's travel and tourism promotion, it leads the Buffalo Niagara tourism industry to work together to generate visitor spending by developing and implementing comprehensive destination marketing programs. It is a self-governing private not-for-profit corporation with a Board of Directors.

The 2019 Business Plan is a reflection of the continued dramatic developments taking place in our community. New hotels, events and attractions are fueling a renewed appreciation for Buffalo Niagara as a visitor destination. VBN is prepared to leverage these assets through creative and innovative messaging, programming and branding. In addition, the sales and marketing efforts we have planned for the year ahead are aligned with a 5-year strategic plan written and approved in 2014.

These are truly exciting times for Buffalo Niagara. Area visitor receipts were at an all-time annual high in 2017, with estimates totaling \$1.787 billion in tourism economic impact for Erie County—a 4.3% increase over the prior year—while also supporting 32,657 local jobs and producing visitor state and local tax revenues estimated at \$221 million. The high rate of tourism economic receipts also translated into a tax savings per Erie County household over \$578 in 2017.

In 2017, Visit Buffalo Niagara's sales team produced solid results, securing 181,261 future hotel room nights; booking 451 conventions, meetings, amateur athletic events and group tours and generating 715 sales leads. These efforts will result in \$154 million in future economic impact. VBN has also been successful in its marketing efforts generating non-local media coverage with a total media value of nearly \$5.4 million.

Mission Statement

Visit Buffalo Niagara sells and markets our assets and attractions to visitors outside the Buffalo Niagara region as a convention, tourism and leisure destination for the economic benefit of the community. VBN is Erie County's lead marketing organization for conventions, meetings, amateur sporting events, cultural and heritage tourism and consumer travel.

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Visit Buffalo Standing Committees

Executive Committee of the VBN Board of Directors

Audit and Finance Committee

Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission – Advisory Council

Marketing Committee

Sales and Services Committee

Destination Development / Industry Relations Committee

Convention Center Advisory Committee

Marketing and Tourism Trends for Fiscal Year 2019

According to the September 2018 U.S. Travel Outlook prepared by the U.S. Travel Association (USTA): “The current state of the economy is strong. Confidence is high among both consumers and businesses across most sectors; the labor market is tight and wage growth is accelerating; and consumer spending and business investment are growing. While the economic glass is more than half full, there are concerns that could darken the forecast. Gathering international storm clouds in the form of a possible trade war with China pose a downside risk to the economy. In addition, accelerating inflation is eating into wage gains that could constrain consumer spending later in the year.”

The Conference Board’s consumer confidence ended 2017 at 122.1, a number slightly below the 17-year high reached in November. Optimism in the labor market remained strong and helped boost consumer confidence at the end of 2017. For the year, consumer confidence averaged 120.4 in 2017, up 21 percent from the 2016 average of 99.6. “What This Means for Travel: While the pace of job growth decelerated, the fact that the labor market tightened in 2017 did help boost consumers’ average wage income, increasing the availability of funds for travel. When Americans are more optimistic about the economy, business and job prospects, they spend more. Consumer confidence, wages and income are important indicators for the travel industry, since travel spending is discretionary, and impacted by how consumers feel about the stability of their jobs and the overall economy” (as cited by USTA).

USTA’s latest forecast projects that business travel is poised to grow at the fastest pace in two decades. It will even outpace leisure travel for each of the next two years, something that has not happened any time this century, according to USTA’s March 2018 U.S. Travel Outlook. Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics, noted a foundation for continued domestic travel growth going forward, thanks to “solid economic fundamentals at home, including a 0.4 percentage boost to GDP growth from tax cuts” (as cited by USTA).

Domestic travel is forecasted to grow approximately 2.6% year-over-year through February 2019, supported by consumer outlays and a tight labor market applying upward pressure on wages, as reported by USTA. Domestic business travel grew faster than the leisure segment in the month of August 2018 and is expected to continue to do so over the next six months as business investment spending remains on solid footing.

Other USTA forecasts for travel nationwide are:

- Total travel expenditures in the U.S.: up 4.5 percent in 2019
- Total domestic person trips: up 1.8 percent in 2019
- Leisure domestic person trips: up 1.8 percent in 2019
- Business domestic person trips: up 1.9 percent in 2019

Largely the “result of an aging Baby Boomer generation and an increasing immigrant population, the Millennials are on the cusp of surpassing Baby Boomers as the nation’s largest living adult generation. The latest population projections from the U.S. Census Bureau project that Millennials will overtake the Boomers in population by 2019 as their numbers swell to 73 million and the Boomers decline to 72 million; GenX are expected to surpass Boomers by 2020” (as cited by USTA). This has ramifications in target marketing for almost all domestic tourism/visitor market verticals.

Adam Sacks, president of Oxford's Tourism Economics group says, "Healthy fundamentals continue to support the domestic marketing including rising wages, a tight labor market, and gains in household net worth. While international inbound travel is expected to continue expanding, demand is anticipated to slow as the global economy moderates."

"The meeting and events industry plays a critical role in supporting a thriving and healthy U.S. economy." That's the big-picture takeaway from Economic Significance of Meetings to the US Economy, a report released in February 2018 from Oxford Economics, which was commissioned by the Events Industry Council and supported by the Meetings Mean Business Coalition and other industry partners. It also shows a growing industry and an increased number of meeting participants. "Our report illustrates that the meetings and events industry continues to grow across all segments as it contributes hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue to the U.S. economy and supports 5.9 million jobs," said Adam Sacks, founder and president of Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics.

According to a report by Airlines For America, "through 2017, inflation-adjusted airfares continued to fall, averaging less than 2010 fares both with and without ancillary fees included. In real terms, the price of domestic air travel – including fees – fell 12.5 percent from 2014 to 2017. In constant 2017 dollars, a round-trip "all-in" ticket averaged \$363 in 2017, well below the 2010 average of \$380. When choosing an airline, leisure travelers continue to rank affordability at the top, followed by flight schedule, on-time reliability and seat comfort. The industry has become increasingly competitive to meet consumer demands, with low-cost and ultra-low-cost carriers growing to serve more markets in the past decade." BUF air carriers added new routes in the past year, including new nonstop service from Austin, Denver, Raleigh-Durham and Tampa.

Visitor Profile for Buffalo Niagara Region

Source: Young Strategies, "Visitor Profile Research" conducted for Visit Buffalo Niagara, May 2015

Leisure Visitor Profile

- Average age is 55 years old
- 57% female
- Educated typically at or above the college level
- Length of stay is 2 night
- Over half of visitors book within 30 days of arrival
- Travel party is usually 2 or 4 people, most likely adults only

Overnight Domestic Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$879.09 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Darwin Martin House – 41%
 - Canalside – 30%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 25%
 - Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park – 22%
 - Graycliff – 21%
- Points of Origin: New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, California

Overnight International Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$910.74 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Did not visit attractions – 38%
 - Darwin Martin House – 25%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 20%
 - Graycliff – 12%
 - Buffalo Bisons game – 10%
- Points of Origin: Southern Ontario

Daytrip Domestic Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$225.70 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Darwin Martin House – 38%
 - Canalside – 20%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 19%
 - Buffalo Zoo – 19%
 - Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park – 17%
- Points of Origin: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida

Daytrip International Visitation

- Travel party spending: \$393.94 per stay
- Top 5 attractions visited:
 - Did not visit attractions – 42%
 - Darwin Martin House – 22%
 - Albright Knox Art Gallery – 16%
 - Buffalo Sabres game – 11%
 - Buffalo Zoo – 10%
- Points of Origin: Southern Ontario

Average Occupancy and Average Daily Rate History

YEAR	AVERAGE OCCUPANCY	AVERAGE DAILY RATE	BED TAX REVENUE	VBN BUDGET*
2009	62.3%	\$87.82	\$7,514,807	\$2,985,000
2010	64.6%	\$87.98	\$7,918,120	\$3,404,200
2011	65.9%	\$90.79	\$8,556,982	\$3,489,050
2012	66.3%	\$93.91	\$8,861,557	\$3,593,774
2013	65.4%	\$96.47	\$9,751,127	\$4,117,570
2014	64.1%	\$99.56	\$9,928,615	\$4,005,000
2015	62.2%	\$101.23	\$10,442,091	\$4,011,133
2016	61.7%	\$102.04	\$10,523,063	\$4,070,750
2017	63.7%	\$104.32	\$10,696,994	\$4,159,570
2018**	63.4%	\$106.20	\$11,124,875	\$4,285,220
2019**	64.0%	\$107.89	\$11,458,620	\$4,370,054

*includes Erie County grant allocation and VBN generated revenue

**2018/2019 projections

Erie County Supply / Demand

YEAR	ERIE COUNTY HOTEL INVENTORY	ERIE COUNTY SUPPLY	ERIE COUNTY DEMAND
2009	9,322 Rooms	3,293,652	2,083,426
2010	9,322 Rooms	3,401,734	2,200,686
2011	9,106 Rooms	3,291,131	2,174,851
2012	9,279 Rooms	3,360,266	2,231,167
2013	9,721 Rooms	3,452,216	2,258,604
2014	10,080 Rooms	3,576,890	2,293,022
2015	10,567 Rooms	3,856,955	2,330,543
2016	10,149 Rooms	3,807,571	2,349,229
2017	10,430 Rooms	3,752,500	2,389,202
2018	11,200 Rooms	4,088,000	2,420,000
2019**	11,500 Rooms	4,197,500	2,466,855

**2019 projections

Erie County Total Tourism Impact

YEAR	TRAVELER SPEND	LABOR INCOME	EMPLOYMENT	LOCAL TAXES	STATE TAXES
2009	\$1,322,253,000	\$721,390,000	27,861	\$86,300,000	\$85,988,000
2010	\$1,368,210,000	\$744,088,000	28,198	\$88,423,000	\$84,823,000
2011	\$1,491,601,000	\$807,347,000	29,148	\$92,797,000	\$90,890,000
2012	\$1,567,228,000	\$833,666,000	28,909	\$105,893,000	\$86,009,000
2013	\$1,605,832,000	\$850,749,000	29,635	\$108,185,000	\$88,023,000
2014	\$1,638,866,000	\$864,890,000	29,888	\$111,538,000	\$89,463,000
2015	\$1,675,930,000	\$916,412,000	30,826	\$114,849,000	\$92,942,000
2016	\$1,713,115,000	\$951,476,000	32,158	\$117,598,000	\$95,584,000
2017	\$1,787,499,000	\$992,895,000	32,657	\$122,910,968	\$98,302,430

New Developments for Fiscal Year 2019

- Decision on the future of the Convention Center
- Garden Walk Buffalo 25th anniversary
- Completion of the Darwin Martin House landscape restoration
- Opening of the Lipsey Buffalo Architecture Center
- Opening of Explore & More at Canalside
- Installation of the restored solar-powered Herschell Carrousel at Canalside
- Aloft @ 500 Pearl Hotel opening January
- USA Girls Hockey Tier II Championships April 2-7
- NCAA Frozen Four April 9-14
- Expanded public amenities and access at Silo City
- Doors Open Buffalo presented in June for the first time by Explore Buffalo
- Opening of the new Wyndham Hotel in the former AM&A's Building
- Impressionism exhibit at Albright-Knox
- Closure of the Albright-Knox for construction of addition (June)
- Tall Ships at Canalside July 4-7
- American Legion Convention July 15-21
- National Association for Campus Activities Mid-Atlantic Conference Oct. 16-20
- Adams Mark name change to Buffalo Grand Hotel

Goals for Fiscal Year 2019

- Become more accountable as the primary curator for and champion of all things Buffalo to the outside world. Convene area place marketers in new ways and on various issues year-round to build future consensus toward an overarching place-brand strategy for the Buffalo Niagara region.
- Develop and secure major meetings/conventions and sporting events for the destination, despite barriers to attracting new business or bookings, by implementing creative sales and servicing strategies and tactics such as strengthening efforts to reach local meeting connectors, utilizing regional economic development strategies and in-state meeting/sports event planners.
- Prioritize a list of destination-enhancing developments that can accelerate the growth of Erie County's visitor economy specifically by deploying more recommended DestinationNEXT best practices throughout the organization and by beginning the process of completing a first-ever tourism master planning process for the Buffalo Niagara region.
- Continue to strengthen the area's appreciation and support of the visitor economy, especially by elevating Visit Buffalo Niagara's credibility with community stakeholders or opinion-leaders and by elevating Buffalo's believability as an international/world class destination in the eyes of residents as well. This is achieved through integrated marketing communications efforts aimed at locals and carried out by key VBN staff according to a new and formalized strategy.
- Prioritize a list of destination-enhancing developments that can accelerate the growth of Erie County's visitor economy specifically deploying more industry best practices through the organization and by planning and identifying resources to complete a first-ever tourism master planning process for Buffalo/Erie County by 2020.
- Continue to develop a service culture and community of support attitude throughout the destination, so that area hospitality partners can bring the destination brand to life through the visitor experiences they offer. Engage all our visitors' senses in interaction with the brand through incurability well-thought-out, brand-compliant activations and communications from VBN/hospitality partners.
- Collaborate with Buffalo Niagara region elected officials, economic development allies and local place marketers to portray our destination as inarguably welcoming to all visitors, groups and events. Combine VBN's customer-centric, collaborative and ethical philosophies into a renewed emphasis on being inclusive with our destination marketing practices.

Marketing Goals

The Marketing Department develops and implements strategies to increase awareness, interest and desire for travel experiences in Buffalo Niagara. The primary goal of the department is to engage with the leisure, convention, sports and travel trade markets and drive demand for overnight stays. Using data-driven insights related to the path to purchase for potential visitors, the department determines the most effective distribution channels and media platforms for our message of a resurgent region. Our goal is to reach the right person with the right message at the right moment and deliver maximum ROI to our partners throughout the Buffalo Niagara hospitality industry. Among the tools we use are paid media, media relations, social media, video productions and print and digital collateral.

Brand Positioning Statement

Buffalo Niagara provides authentic and unexpected experiences to inquisitive explorers. The region's revitalized waterfront, restored architecture, thriving arts scene, culinary renaissance, vibrant neighborhoods, outdoor activities and historic charm make it a not to be missed treasure.

Marketing Objectives

- Position Buffalo Niagara as a compelling leisure, meetings, sports and group destination.
- Continue to enhance brand visibility by working with regional hospitality partners.
- Increase hotel occupancy and revenue.
- Ensure VisitBuffaloNiagara.com is the most authoritative source for regional travel information.
- Encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more.
- Increase website traffic and engagement levels (sessions, time on page, page views).
- Convert regional day-trippers to overnight visitors.
- Continue implementation of the Unexpected Buffalo campaign.
- Re-launch Millennial/Generation X Marketing Initiative.

Marketing Strategies, All Sectors

- Amplify destination buzz through creative content, social outreach and video productions.
- Continue to evolve the 'Unexpected Buffalo' campaign.
- Develop deeply researched storytelling for media pitches and VisitBuffaloNiagara.com.
- Continue to generate new photo assets of destination experiences.
- Secure funding for regional marketing initiatives through statewide funding programs.

Marketing Strategies, Leisure Visitors

- Continue implementation of the "Unexpected Buffalo" in key regional markets such as Toronto, Hamilton, Pittsburgh, Erie and Rochester.
- Implement a Millennial/Gen X marketing "Find the Unexpected" campaign.
- Engage with new advertising media such as streaming audio, podcasts, native advertising, etc.
- Promote the Buffalo brand across multiple experience clusters (e.g. architecture, art, history, culinary, outdoor recreation, performing arts, girlfriend getaways, etc.) with related calls-to-action and promotions.
- Continue to produce annual touring guide, marketing collateral and related sales materials.
- Maintain VisitBuffaloNiagara.com website, Trip Advisor page and social media presence.
- Promote the use of the "Ask the Unexpected Buffalo" chatbot on Facebook Messenger.

- Grow e-newsletter subscriber database through a targeted lead generation program.
- Promote the opening of the Lipsey Buffalo Architecture Center.
- Promote Frank Lloyd Wright's Buffalo with an emphasis on the landscape rehabilitation at the Martin House and the restoration of the Isabelle Martin House at Graycliff.
- Promote the 25th anniversary of Garden Walk Buffalo and related horticulture tourism attractions.
- Promote the opening of Explore & More and the Buffalo Heritage Carrousel at Canalside.
- Continue working with Madden Media to optimize website and audit user behavior patterns.
- Continue to promote the Buffalo Wing Trail in key regional markets with the support of Trail sponsor, Labatt USA.
- Conduct a research study designed to measure consumer response to the Buffalo Niagara visitor experience.
- Produce two new videos with Paget Films: Food and Family Fun.
- Produce new video content for the Find the Unexpected Millennial/Gen-X campaign.
- Produce four new videos blogs with Billy & Pat.
- Continue to produce in-house video content (Buffalo Stories, Promo Videos, Facebook Live).
- Work with DTN to coordinate website ad sales.

Marketing Strategies, Meetings & Conventions

- Develop new collateral for major shows throughout the year.
- Refresh the Bring It Home campaign.
- Continue to develop meetings content for website.
- Enhance the venue content and assets in the meetings section of VisitBuffaloNiagara.com.
- Support Global Meetings Industry Day.

Marketing Strategies, Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission

- Continue to support sports staff with targeted collateral, enhanced website content and social presence.

Marketing Strategies, Convention Services

- Continue to produce map brochure and restaurant flyers for use in servicing meeting/conference delegates, sports/events attendees and leisure visitors.
- Identify high profile conventions, as appropriate to receive our social media package that includes signage, social media monitoring, contests and Random Acts of Kindness.

Marketing Strategies, Travel Trade

- In concert with other regional DMOs, I Love NY and Brand USA, cross-promote the region's assets to domestic and international markets.
- Disseminate Unexpected Buffalo brand identity in regular e-newsletters.

Marketing Department Success Measures

- Increase website sessions to 1,400,000
- Increase website page views to 2,900,000
- Maintain website time on page at 1:30
- Maintain consumer email database at 120,000
- Increase Facebook fans to 94,500
- Increase Instagram followers to 28,000
- Increase Twitter followers to 30,000

MARKETING ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Marketing Committee Meeting	■			■			■			■		
E-Newsletter Distribution (Domestic & Canadian)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Beer brochure								■				
Buffalo Wing Trail Brochure	■											
Map brochure					■							
Runner's Map					■							
Touring Guide				■								
Annual Report			■									
ESTO								■				

Communications Goals

The Marketing Department is responsible for managing all external communication activities, including all public relations, media relations and community awareness functions. The out-of-market PR strategy will focus on media outlets reaching high-yield audience with the greatest likelihood to travel to Buffalo Niagara, thus providing the greatest return on investment. Targeted niche media will include LGBT, culinary, architecture, horticulture, outdoor and family fun. Staff will continue to engage in relationship building with traditional media, bloggers and social influencers in order to ensure key messages are conveyed across various demographic groups and channels.

Communications Objectives

Local Objectives

- Elevate Visit Buffalo Niagara's visibility to local consumers, media and members of the Buffalo Niagara hospitality community.
- Engage in building strong relationships with local television, print, radio and online media to help build credibility in the community.
- Promote positive impact of tourism through public awareness initiatives, press releases and op-ed pieces detailing travel figures specific to Buffalo Niagara.
- Work with appropriate communications and public relations representatives at local organizations to collaborate on story ideas and to ensure consistent messaging.

Out-Of-Market Objectives

- Generate positive media coverage on Buffalo Niagara as a premier domestic and international leisure, meetings and sports destination, while increasing the quality and quantity of print, broadcast and online coverage.
- Reach out to social media influencers in key regional markets, as well as targeted markets with significant air service to Buffalo Niagara.
- Pursue qualified travel media to visit the destination on individual visits or group press trips.
- Work to develop and discover story ideas, new developments, events and unique publicity angles from local tourism industry.

Communications Strategies

- Write and disseminate pitch letters around new developments, major exhibitions and events as well as renovations and openings of attractions.
- Write and distribute ready-to-publish stories aimed at regional media.
- Develop and regularly keep an online press room updated with press releases, backgrounders, media alerts and industry facts and figures to communicate news and information.
- Develop media relations campaigns to complement marketing plan initiatives.
- Continue to produce collateral pieces for media contacts, I Love NY media events and Discover America Day.
- Update and maintain the online press kit for use with travel journalists and writers.
- Expand photo library.
- Promote architecture-themed press trips in partnership with the Darwin Martin House, Graycliff, Hotel Henry and the Lipsey Buffalo Architecture Center.
- Promote family-focused press trips to Mommy and Family bloggers in partnership with Explore & More and Canalside carousel.
- Promote outdoor recreation oriented press trips aimed at travel media and millennial influencers.

- Host 50 individual media visits in 2019.
- Travel to New York City, Toronto and regional markets to hold desk-side visits with key media.
- Attend the International Media Marketplace in New York City.
- Attend the Society of American Travel Writers Eastern Region conference or SATW National.
- Continue to strengthen the use of social media as a proactive tool for media outreach, research and targeted pitching.
- Position VBN executive staff as travel industry experts for journalists to use as top-of-mind sources for stories on area tourism.
- Continue to pitch regional and national food media on the Buffalo Wing Trail.
- Pitch garden and travel media on the 25th anniversary of Garden Walk Buffalo.
- Attend the PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference.
- Host a travel media/influencer group FAM tour.
- Host media networking event in Toronto.

Media Relations Success Measures

- Measure total audience/engagement generated by hosted influencers.
- Facilitate at least 80 out-of-market media placements.
- Host a minimum of 50 media visits.
- Generate at least \$3 million in ad equivalency value.

COMMUNICATIONS ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
International Media Marketplace	■											
PRSA Travel & Tourism Conference						■						
Regional Desk Visits					■				■			
Discover America Day, Toronto										■		
Society of American Travel Writers					■							
Toronto Media Event									■			

Convention Sales

The primary goal of the Visit Buffalo Niagara Sales Department is to promote Buffalo and Erie County as a convention and meetings destination, establishing a strong regional and national presence in the meetings industry, thus initiating direct economic impact by increasing hotel room night production for area hotel partners and incremental sales for restaurants, cultural attractions and transportation companies.

Convention Sales Objectives

- Generate leads and produce hotel room business for Erie County hotels and other county venues.
- Develop and execute e-campaign that promotes all countywide meeting hotel areas.
- Enhance awareness of Buffalo Niagara region by increasing our sales team's presence in key feeder markets (Mid-Atlantic and Northeast), targeting key meeting planners and decision makers who will bring conventions and meetings to Erie County.
- Promote local awareness of the "Bring it Home" program through the distribution of collateral in key locations, advertising, speaking engagements, social media, and newsletter articles and public relations efforts.
- Conduct a travelling roadshow by way of local sales calls promoting "Bring It Home" to targeted key industries.
- Collaborate with NYSDMO's in co-op sales and marketing initiatives, updates to newyorkmeetings.com relative to advertising and tradeshow sponsorship opportunities.
- Partner with Buffalo Ambassadors from local and regional universities, associations and corporations. Work toward the common goal of selling our destination alongside these connectors who serve on boards and councils of national and regional organizations, as identified by backyard marketing. Educate them on the importance of their participation, to assist in bringing their respective organizations to the Buffalo Niagara region.
- With a focus on direct sales, continue to participate in industry-related tradeshow; conduct sales blitzes and coordinate relationship building events that will put the destination in the forefront of planners' minds.
- Work closely with the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center and key hotels to identify and solicit city-wide conventions and corporate meetings that have the potential to use the facility.
- Visit Buffalo Niagara sales team members will continue to serve on and seek out leadership board of director and committee positions with national and regional industry organizations (e.g. CVB Reps, MPI, BNSME, PCMA, ESSAE).
- VBN sales team members will work with the Destination Development/Industry Relations department to develop an educational program for the local public, aiding us in our quest for local connectors' support.
- Ensure that VBN sales team members are seen as leaders in their profession and key partners locally.
- Create a short questionnaire to solicit specific feedback from prospective clients and lost city-wide business.

Conventions Sales Target Markets

Overall strategy is a concentration of sales efforts towards:

- National, State and Regional Business *
- National, State and Regional Association Business *
- Continue to focus on regional business that is within the drive market or one-hour flight time, by emphasizing value, bottom-line cost and ROI to the host organization when meeting in Buffalo Niagara.

*Emphasis on Ethnic-Minority, Faith-based, Fraternal, Preservation, Health & Medical, Science & Engineering, Manufacturing/Distribution/Logistics, Agriculture & Food Products, Higher Education and Military Reunion vertical markets.

Conventions Sales Strategies

- Engage with area Chambers of Commerce (West Seneca, Amherst, Clarence, Hamburg, Cheektowaga) to promote “Bring it Home” and hosting meetings in hometown areas. Present the program at monthly lunch/dinner events.
- Create “Presidents Forum” which will involve key industry professionals from high priority sectors to act when called upon to offer assistance to meeting and event planners when programming expertise as needed. Promote this value added option to meeting planners.
- Conduct quarterly meetings with the region’s economic development and start-up communities to gain insights and connections with high-priority industry clusters and their representatives (e.g., life sciences and medical, clean tech and advanced manufacturing) and recruit associated conferences to Buffalo.
- Participate in industry trade shows and events which focus on key markets, continue to develop small scale networking opportunities to attract targeted meeting planners such as small dinner groups, cocktail parties, or “meet for coffee”.
- Conduct site inspections for prospective and tentative clients.
- Conduct a Familiarization tour, with a primary focus on meeting planners from targeted National and State Associations. Develop and distribute leads to Erie County hotels.
- Retain the Talley Management Group, an In-Market Engagement Agency located in the D.C. market, to allow us to have the advantage of an in-market mailing address, phone number, and private conference room for appointments with national associations meeting planners.
- Utilize the Talley Management Group’s experience in the DC marketplace to assist in solicitation efforts of new accounts, client event planning and networking opportunities.
- Participate in CVB Reps, a networking organization that is exclusive to DC in-market DMO’s, which holds events attended by several hundred key meeting planners.
- Conduct quarterly business strategy meetings with hotel directors of sales to review need periods and target prospects.
- Continue working closely with the Office of Veteran’s Affairs and the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park as a tool to identifying and booking military reunions to our area.
- Continue to build on the success of the “Bring it Home” program through local sales presentations, speaking engagements and local advertising opportunities. Work with the following agencies for phase three of the campaign; Erie County, City of Buffalo, Empire State Development, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Leadership Buffalo, University at Buffalo and Buffalo State University.
- Distribute “Bring it Home” campaign materials to key distribution points such as: Buffalo Convention Center, college and universities, medical campus, Rotary, Leadership Buffalo, etc.

- Through the Buffalo Ambassador program, host community partners to bring members together and educate them on hotels and venues we have to offer.
- Participate in regional third party planner “Meet and Greet” events, concentrating on Experient, Helms Briscoe and Conference Direct to educate them on existing and new Buffalo Niagara area product.
- Utilize and enhance listings within third party online destination sales and marketing channels like Conference Direct and Experient.
- Participate in member chapter events for networking and prospecting such as: MACE, Capital, NYCMA, NEPCMA.
- Partner with the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center to convene the Customer Advisory Council. The sixth annual meeting of established executive level convention/meeting planning professionals will continue dialogue dedicated to assisting us in strategic meetings destination management planning.
- Actively engage CAC members to attend “Meet & Greet” events in DC and other planned prospecting events.
- Utilize e-marketing tools to promote Buffalo Niagara area and generate leads, through an integrated digital marketing campaign. Send e-newsletter “Tourism Insider” to targeted planners in CRM database, pre and post tradeshow contacts, and other potential clients, updating them on destination product, as well as directing them to website.
- Continue the “Unexpected Buffalo” campaign; develop dynamic collateral materials and tradeshow booths, for consistent brand positioning for tradeshow, sales missions and other sales initiatives and programs.
- Work with marketing department to keep advertising placement consistent with target sales markets.
- Work with marketing department’s media relations/social media staff to develop pitch stories to local newspaper and broadcast media, to aid in educating locals on the Visit Buffalo Niagara sales efforts and its mission of increasing sustainable economic impact from conventions, meetings and reunions.
- Continue to use the African American Heritage Guide as a marketing piece to attract more African American meetings, conventions and family reunions to coincide with Black History month.
- Work with marketing department’s media relations staff to develop quarterly news releases and briefings targeting the meetings industry through publications such as; Meetings East, M&C, Meetings Focus, Meeting Mentor, Convene, Religious Conference Manager & USAE Association News.
- Explore the opportunity to cross market with other destinations when applicable to expand customer prospect outreach and database.
- Utilize local university students from business, marketing & finance and parks, recreation and tourism departments as interns for an ongoing marketing research program, freeing up sales team members from the front-end research necessary for consistent prospecting.

Conventions Sales Success Measures

- Generate XXX leads.
- Generate XXXXXX definite hotel room nights.
- Conduct a minimum of 15 weekly solicitations per sales director.
- Conduct 30 site inspections for prospective and tentative clients.
- Conduct quarterly hotel director of sales meetings.
- Attend XX tradeshow targeting convention/meeting planners; create relationship building opportunities at each.
- Book 10 Convention Center pieces of business.

- Convene Visit Buffalo Niagara Sales Advisory Council meeting.
- Conduct sales missions to Albany, Washington DC and, when appropriate, coincide with Potomac chapter of MPI, CVB reps events and PCMA.
- Host client luncheons and client receptions in Albany & DC for Association planners.

CONVENTION SALES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
PCMA	■											
Emerge Conference	■											
Connect Diversity		■										
YMRC Show		■										
Experient Envision			■									
PCMA Event			■									
MPI			■									
Helms Briscoe Partner Meeting & Tradeshow				■					■			
Fraternal Executives Association					■							
AMPS Events					■							
Empire State Society of Association Executives						■						
Military Reunion Network						■						
Cvent Connect						■						
MPI WEC						■						
ASAE Tradeshow								■				
Connect Corporate								■				
Professional Fraternal Association									■			
Connect Faith										■		
Small Market Meetings										■		
Connect Medical & Connect Technical										■		
CMP Conclave											■	
NYS DMO Joint Events					■				■			
Connect Independent												■
Bring It Home Program quarterly presentations			■			■			■			■
ESSAE Functions		■										■
Customer Advisory Council									■			
All Market FAM						■						
State/Regional Association Sales Calls	■	■		■				■	■	■	■	■
National Association Sales Calls – DC	■		■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■
Fraternal Association Sales Calls				■								■
Albany Networking Luncheons		■								■		
Member Chapter Events MACE, Capital, NYCMA, MPI, PCMA	■		■	■	■			■	■	■	■	■
CVB Reps – Tally Group						■		■				■
DMO-IMEA Sales Missions – Talley Group					■			■		■		■
Directors of Sales Meetings			■			■			■			■

Sports Sales

The Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission, a division of the Visit Buffalo Niagara sales department, markets and promotes the Buffalo Niagara region and the area's sports venues in order to attract new business for the region in the form of sports events, tournaments and championships. The BNSC also works closely with local partner organizations to successfully host and service existing events primarily for the purpose of enhancing the product and developing repeat business. Both the marketing and service components are designed to effectively position and brand Buffalo Niagara as one of the nation's premier sports event destinations.

Sports Marketing Objectives

- Generate sports business leads and produce hotel room night business for Erie County hotels and other county businesses.
- Host the NCAA Frozen Four working closely with US Hockey, Buffalo Sabres, Pegula Sports Entertainment, City of Buffalo to ensure a successful experience for friends and family. Deploy necessary volunteers; provide hospitality partner training, social media assistance and press kits as needed.
- Execute a comprehensive sports marketing campaign with the goal to bring awareness to the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission locally and regionally, including but not limited to a sports promotional video, marketing collateral, special promotion events, city signage, etc.
- Promote local awareness of the "Bring it Home" program through advertising, speaking engagements, social media, newsletter articles and Public Relations efforts.
- Work with marketing department's media relations staff to develop quarterly news releases and briefings targeting sports/events publications like: Sports Travel, Sports Events, Sports business journal, Connect, NASC.
- Generate positive exposure and visibility through social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and e-newsletter for partners of Erie County and events rights holders.
- Provide excellent leadership and/or support in the area of hosting and servicing sporting events.
- Position Buffalo Niagara as a "premier destination" for hosting sporting events.
- Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with local host partners and organizations.
- Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with national host partners and organizations.
- Continue to strengthen the BNSC's reputation (and that of its Advisory Commission) as the foremost authority on sports event industry in Erie County.
- Engage Sports Advisory Council to assist in executing the TSE Consulting recommendations for an Amateur Sports Master Plan designed to advise and provide data to public and private entities and community constituents on proposed product development.
- Research possible means for a facility and venue development study that will show current facility and venue inventory, competitor's inventory and our proposed ideal facility for Buffalo and Erie County.
- Advocate for new and improved sports facilities and venues in Erie County. Consult, advise and provide data upon request to public and private entities and community constituents on proposed product development. Encourage sports facility development that will ultimately generate increased visitor business and economic impact for Erie County.

- Establish a sports speaker series program that will articulate the importance of sports sales for the destination as well as expand the event opportunities for Buffalo Niagara venues.

Sports Sales Target Audiences

- Core sports: Baseball, Figure Skating, Fishing, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Swimming and Diving, Track & Field
- Focus on amateur athletic organizations: AAU, NSA, USOC National Governing Bodies (USA Hockey, USA Rowing, USA Football, USA Cycling, etc.), OHL, USHL, plus many youth and amateur organizations and associations
- Collegiate sports: NCAA Championships, MAAC Conference Championships
- High School sports: NYSPHSAA Championships, ECIC Championships
- Professional sports: NHL, NFL, NLL
- Geographic scope: Local, Regional, National, Occasional international
- Sports Associations and Conference: S.P.O.R.T.S. Relationship Conference, US Sports Congress, Connect Sports, USA Hockey , NYSAHA

Sports Sales Strategies

- Execute the recommendations made by TSE Consulting in the comprehensive Sports Master Plan. Using the plan as a guide, improve upon sports sales and marketing efforts as well as provide an outline of future venue needs and development and event opportunities.
- Attend national tradeshows to meet one on one with event rights holders and national governing bodies to promote Buffalo Niagara as a premier destination to host sport competitions.
- Prospect strategically for new business, primarily through existing contacts and client relationships, but also via NASC events database, the internet, sports directories, industry publications, industry contacts and similar resources.
- Research and evaluate potential events (in coordination with our host partners) to determine which ones are the “right fit” for Buffalo Niagara.
- Contact local sports organizations, clubs and associations to learn which events they compete in at the statewide, regional or national levels, and determine which of those events might be a reasonable and desirable fit for Buffalo Niagara. At the same time, determine which of those organizations would be interested in helping to recruit, manage and host the event once it has been booked.
- Present “Bring it Home” program in local sales presentations, speaking engagements and in local advertising opportunities.
- Develop and generate qualified sports leads for Buffalo Niagara hotels and Erie County venues.
- Produce high-quality bid proposals and presentations for select sporting events.
- Work closely with hotels, venues and local host organizations and partners to develop lead opportunities and to provide quality services.
- Travel as needed for sales calls and presentations in order to recruit and secure new and retain annual sports business.
- Organize and host site inspections and client events for rights holders and event planners to showcase the area’s sports venues, accommodations and attractions.

- Engage Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission Advisory Council through targeted communications/ quarterly meetings and special events.
- Continue to work closely with the communications department to identify media opportunities to increase awareness of the BNSC.
- Work with communications department to develop quarterly news releases and briefings targeting the sports industry through publications such as; Sports Travel and Sports Events Magazine.
- Work with VBN communications department to use social media to target events rights holders and bring awareness to the Sports Commission. Produce 30 second video clips to promote the Sports Commission and recruit sporting events to Buffalo.

Sport Sales Success Measures

- Generate XXX sales leads for sporting events and competitions.
- Generate XXXXX definite room nights.
- Conduct a minimum of 15 weekly solicitations for new business per sales director.
- Attend tradeshow targeting sports/events planners such as; NASC, CONNECT Sports, TEAMS, US Sports Congress.
- Attend events/conferences the year prior to our hosting in order to increase attendance by distributing visitor and attendee information.
- Execute Sports Master Plan for VBN and the Buffalo Niagara region.
- Conduct a minimum of 30 individual site visits for sports/events planners.
- Generate a quarterly communication for the sports advisory council.
- Coordinate and execute one to two sports speaker series sessions.

SPORTS SALES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
National Association of Sports Commission				■								
Connect Sports								■				
US Olympic Committee									■			
SPORTS Relationship Conference									■			
US Aquatic Sports									■			
Sports Business Journal Game Changers Conference									■			
NASC Small Mid-Market Segment Meetings										■		
TEAMS											■	
United State Track & Field Assoc.												■
National Softball Association												■
US Sports Congress												■
BNSC newsletter	■			■			■			■		■
Sports Speaker Series Sessions				■					■			■
Sports Advisory Council Meeting		■			■			■			■	

Sports Client Services

Sports Client Services is responsible for enhancing the visitor experience through excellent customer service and differentiated product development and delivery. Our purpose is to work with destination partners to help deliver a wonderful and distinct Buffalo Niagara experience to visitors

We believe that by building strong relationships and providing extraordinary experiences, we build a “services to sales” approach that will affect repeat and referral business and positively impact the county’s economy.

Sports Client Services Objectives

- Increase attendance at Buffalo Niagara sporting events.
- Provide an exceptional experience to event organizers to ensure rebooking opportunities for the destination.
- Serve as liaison between event organizers/clients and the destination’s tourism industry.
- Maintain a high commitment to customer service excellence internally (to partners and peers) and externally (to clients and visitors).
- Use the servicing and planning process to grow client relationships one event at a time. By providing “one stop shop” services, we will integrate a cooperative spirit between event organizers and Erie County hospitality partners.

Sports Client Services Strategies

- Consult with clients to identify specific needs. As their partner, provide a menu of services, past successes and examples as guidelines to customer services.
- Host the NCAA Frozen Four; working closely with US Hockey, Buffalo Sabres, Pegula Sports Entertainment, City of Buffalo to ensure a successful experience for Friends and Family. Deploy necessary volunteers; provide hospitality partner training, social media assistance and press kits as needed.
- Identify local partners, venues and other services to assist event organizers in producing successful events.
- Offer a social media platform as additional resource for attendees to enhance their visitor experience.
- Engage in attendance building; traveling to the previous year’s host city to promote Buffalo hosting the following year.
- Conduct meetings or conference calls with event organizers, their marketing and public relations departments to strategize how Visit Buffalo Niagara/Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission can assist with their efforts to create event awareness and promote the destination.
- Offer the services of VBN Marketing Department when appropriate, including press releases, social media, creative messaging, and customized maps for reproduction.
- Educate clients on other services offered including housing services, welcome letters and gifts, volunteers, visitor information and welcome from local dignitaries.
- Utilize volunteer management software to assist in scheduling volunteers for sporting events.

- Host hospitality meetings with related hotels, restaurants and local businesses when hosting large city-wide sporting events
- Work with the VBN Industry Relations Director, local colleges/athletic departments to recruit volunteers and interns from the sport management programs or related fields.
- Assist clients in identifying possible local area corporations that may be considered for sponsorship.
- Obtain history of an event by attending events or having calls with cities that have been previous hosts for events that we are now hosting.
- Partnering with the local hotels, restaurants, host venues on recruiting volunteers and providing extended hospitality to the sporting event
- Develop a comprehensive facility guide of our sporting venues with their specs, offered amenities, layout diagrams and photos.

Tour and Travel Sales

Travel trade is a division of VBN's sales department, designed to market and promote Buffalo Niagara and Western New York to attract domestic and international group and frequent independent travelers (F.I.T.) to the region in the form of leisure motor coach groups and individual international travelers.

Target Audiences

Domestic Seniors/Adults

International / FIT - Primary target markets: Canada, China, Germany & UK

Secondary markets: Australia, India, Brazil, Italy, Ireland

Domestic and International Student / Youth

Travel Trade Strategies

- Attend and participate at domestic and international tradeshows such as ABA, IPW, OMCA, to promote Buffalo Niagara as a premier destination for tour groups.
- Invite NYC based receptive operators for a FAM in Buffalo; bring together Buffalo Niagara hotels and attractions.
- Continue to promote the Tour Package "9 Days in NYS," which is a self-drive FIT package, in collaboration with Visit Syracuse and Dutchess County Tourism to promote international visitation across New York State.
- Work with tour operators to identify unique overnight stay options with Erie County hotel properties that match the specific needs of targeted markets/countries.
- Identify appropriate opportunities with tour operators to market and promote Buffalo Niagara attractions to increase group and FIT visitation.
- Work closely with the Greater Niagara Region, I Love NY and the international I Love NY offices to cultivate new sales relationships through co-op marketing/site inspections/FAMs.
- Partner with I Love NY offices on the International sales mission designed to meet face to face with tour operators in order to sell them on the greater Buffalo Niagara region.
- Explore the opportunity of creating an online international tour operator/travel agent certification program to better sell the destination to consumers in their market.
- Further develop Buffalo Niagara technical tour opportunities/products.

Travel Trade Success Measures

- Generate XXX sales leads.
- Generate XXXXXX definite room nights.
- Conduct a minimum of 15 weekly solicitations.
- Conduct 20 site visits and fam tours.
- Attend 5 tradeshows targeting the travel trade and group planners.

TRAVEL TRADE SALES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
American Bus Association	■											
Heartland Travel Showcase		■										
NAJ Tour Operator Summit				■								
I Love NY International FAM					■							
International Pow Wow						■						
All Market FAM						■						
NYC Receptive Operator Marketplace							■					
I love NY International Sales Mission								■				
Domestic Sales Mission									■			
I Love NY International FAM tour										■		
Ontario Motor Coach Association											■	

Client Services

Client Services is responsible for enhancing the planner and attendee experience through excellent customer service. Our purpose is to work with destination partners to help deliver a wonderful and distinct Buffalo Niagara experience. VBN's leadership for the destination will focus on integrating programs that will add value and maximize the group visitor experience. We believe that by building strong relationships and providing extraordinary experiences, we build a "services to sales" approach that will affect repeat and referral business to positively impact the county's economy.

Client Services Objectives

- Increase attendance at Buffalo Niagara conventions, meetings and sporting events.
- Provide an exceptional experience to event organizers to ensure rebooking opportunities for the destination.
- Promote "Bring it Home" program to local meeting & convention hosts.
- Serve as liaison between event organizers/clients and the destination's tourism industry.
- Maintain a high commitment to customer service excellence internally (to partners and peers) and externally (to clients and visitors).
- Use the servicing and planning process to grow client relationships. By providing "one stop shop" services, we will integrate a cooperative spirit between planners and Erie County hospitality partners.
- Motivate convention delegates to return as leisure visitors.

Client Services Strategies

- Consult with clients to identify specific needs. As their partner, provide a menu of services, past successes and examples as guidelines to customer services.
- Identify local partners, venues and other services to assist planners in producing successful events.
- Offer the benefit of the "Bring it Home" campaign to locals who host a meeting/convention.
- Offer a social media platform as additional resource for attendees to enhance their visitor experience.
- Create customized attendance building materials.
- Conduct meetings or conference calls with planners, their marketing and public relations departments to strategize how Visit Buffalo Niagara can assist with their efforts to create event awareness and promote the destination.
- Offer the services of VBN Marketing Department to include press releases, social media, creative messaging, and customized maps for reproduction.
- Educate clients on other services offered by Visit Buffalo Niagara including housing services, welcome letters, volunteers, visitor information and welcome from local dignitaries.
- Create and distribute on welcome desks compelling materials that will invite convention delegates to return as a leisure visitor.
- Utilize volunteer management software to assist in scheduling volunteers for meetings, convention and sporting events.
- Continue ongoing quarterly training for Buffalo Ambassador volunteers to keep them up-to-date on changes in cultural attractions, restaurants, and events.
- Recruit Buffalo Ambassador volunteers to increase our pool of volunteers.

- Continue use of our customer satisfaction survey for meeting and convention planners, and implement a client incentive program to increase completed surveys.
- Assist clients in identifying possible local area corporations that may be considered for sponsorship.

Client Services Success Measures

- 50% returned customer satisfaction surveys
- An average customer satisfaction score of 4.5 out of 5
- 200 groups serviced
- Conduct quarterly training for Buffalo Ambassadors

CONVENTION SERVICES ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Customer Satisfaction Survey	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Deploy/Collect/ Review Customer Surveys	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Buffalo Ambassador Volunteer Training	■			■				■			■	
Buffalo Ambassador Recruitment	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Attend ESPA	■											
Update VBN Services Collateral Materials		■			■			■			■	

Destination Development and Industry Relations

The Destination Development and Industry Relations Department provides collaborative opportunities, programming and educational outreach to the industry that supports the sales and marketing efforts of Visit Buffalo Niagara. The goal of the department is that Visit Buffalo Niagara will be top of mind for anyone wishing information related to tourism in Erie County, and we will reach this goal by addressing the needs of our partners and the community in ways that will enhance visitors' experiences through world-class customer service, helpful, easy-to-find and up-to-date resources, and visibility throughout the destination.

Destination Development and Industry Relations Objectives

- Communicate the value of VBN efforts regarding the VBN mission, its objectives, marketing process, the value of its works and economic impact, along with data that is useful for its constituents.
- Serve leisure and group visitors, ensuring they have all the resources they need to enjoy their stay or extend their stay while in the destination.
- Provide timely and comprehensive fulfillment to requests for information via telephone, email and reader response.
- Work with Client Services to ensure that meetings and sports delegates receive the necessary assistance and information to make their stay pleasant and memorable.
- Maintain a high commitment to customer service excellence both internally and externally.
- Serve as the official resource for visitors and the industry of:
 - Visitor information
 - Current research, trends and statistical data
- Foster a culture of connecting, learning and collaborating within the industry to promote destination prosperity.
- Cultivate relationships that advance the hospitality and tourism profession.

Industry Relations Strategies and Tactics

Visit Buffalo Niagara University

Visit Buffalo Niagara University is the umbrella under which all seminars and informative programming are represented. The offerings are meant to keep members of the industry connected, learning and collaborating with VBN and one another. These programs are open to all tourism and hospitality professionals, as well as volunteers (when applicable), and include:

- Quarterly industry meetings, held at different locations throughout the county, industry meetings will provide partners with networking opportunities while keeping them updated on VBN sales, marketing and public relations efforts. Quarterly industry meetings will also include an educational topic, presented by an “expert” in the field.

- Buffalo Unexpected Deals, a discount program available to conventioners, spectators and leisure visitors for discounts at participating businesses on food, tours, merchandise, etc.
- Monthly destination/customer service training to build the learners' knowledge and awareness of new development in the county, helpful resources, and best-practice customer service.
- Monthly Destination Extranet for Leads, Information, Listings and Activities (Delila) Extranet Training to introduce and teach new partners and their employees on how to access the system - the features and benefits of doing so (can also be a refresher course for those needing help).
- Monthly industry nights, open to frontline staff personnel, volunteers, board members, etc., the industry night will give attendees an opportunity to meet the owner, tour the facility, experience the venue with peers.
- Annual tourism summit, which will provide deeper training on trends in marketing, human resources, destination development, sales – or other topics of interest, based on feedback from surveys sent throughout the year.
- Ongoing communications and resource library:
 - Weekly **Buffalo Niagara This Week**, monthly **Travel Pulse**, quarterly **Tourism Insider**, **Convention Calendar** and **VBN University Tips and Trends** for graduates of the training program. All materials will be archived on the corporate website and made available via Delila (extranet), along with the annual report, business plan and any updated research.
- Semi-annual volunteer mixer to recognize and thank volunteers for their hours of service; announce new opportunities for the future; updates on any changes in protocol or procedures and provide networking opportunities among new volunteers.
- National Travel & Tourism Week and Beacon Awards Luncheon. VBN's annual luncheon is held during NTTW to honor and celebrate Erie County's tourism industry – the businesses, people, developments and accomplishments that make the industry so successful. It is a time for recognition and networking; members of the industry and their families, elected officials, vendors and media are invited to attend. The Beacon Awards are awarded to exemplars in hospitality and tourism; along with Bring it Home ambassadors. Winners are peer-nominated; and judging is done by area colleges and universities. The annual \$1,000 hospitality scholarship is given to a deserving high school graduate of Erie County who is attending a college or university in Western New York for the purposes of exploring a career in this field.

Additional events held throughout the week include, but are not limited to:

- Lighting the town red, the color of hospitality
 - Scheduled open house in the visitor center
 - Recognizing the flight crew through random acts of kindness (delivery of sponge candy)
 - Billboard campaign, using promotional space donated by Lamar Advertising
- Working with the Administrative Department and Destination Development Advisory Committee, Visit Buffalo Niagara will continue to explore and develop new opportunities for the region, as well as fine tune concerns and issues brought forth by industry partners. Examples include the need to update in-destination, county-wide wayfinding and external signage; Airbnb legislation and other issues that arise.

- Provide comprehensive visitor resources and consultation services through two visitor centers
 - Adequately staff and train personnel and volunteers
 - Ensure that city, county and regional tourism businesses are represented appropriately through brochure display and distribution; consistently maintain and grow awareness by actively engaging the personnel in these locations.
 - Provide oversight on pricing and mix of merchandise being sold at the visitor centers.
 - Continue to develop partnerships with tour companies
 - Provide region-wide brochure distribution to hotels, attractions, restaurants and other high-profile, trafficked areas to maximize availability for visitors to obtain the most current visitor publications.
 - Identify new and existing tourism-related businesses and encourage them to engage with Visit Buffalo Niagara and the tourism industry through VBN activities.
 - Continue to promote and encourage engagement with Visit Buffalo Niagara calendar of events.

Destination Development and Industry Relations Success Measure

- Continue to increase portal access usage in Simpleview CRM.
- Combined merchandise sales goal of \$287,000 in 2019, an increase of 2.09%
- 47,000 referrals made to visitors at information tables and visitor centers
- Plan, coordinate and execute the National Travel & Tourism Beacon Awards luncheon.
- Plan, coordinate and execute annual scholarship program.
- Plan, coordinate and execute National Travel & Tourism week activities.
- Plan, coordinate and execute annual Tourism Summit
- Plan, coordinate and execute all aspects of Visit Buffalo Niagara University
- Continue to grow Buffalo Ambassador Network from 4,000 contacts to 5,000 contacts by 2020.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT / INDUSTRY RELATIONS ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Beacon Awards Luncheon / Annual Meeting												
Beacon Awards Planning Committee												
Beacon Awards Nomination Period												
Scholarship Program Application Period												
Tourism Summit Planning Committee												
Tourism Summit												
Quarterly Tourism Forum												
Extranet Training												
Destination/Customer Service Training												
Volunteer Mixer												
Frontline Staff FAM Tour												
Holiday Open House												
Touring Guide Distribution												
Monthly industry nights												
Travel Pulse												
Tourism Insider												
Buffalo Niagara This Week (52 weeks)												

Administrative Goals

The primary goal of the Administrative Department is to provide managerial guidance to all Visit Buffalo Niagara Departments related to staffing, management, operational efficiencies, organization strategic planning, education and community-based initiatives that position Visit Buffalo Niagara as the leader in hospitality and tourism-based economic development for Erie County.

Administrative Objectives

- Maintain the proactive reporting, measurements and formats of monthly, quarterly and yearly tourism data through the acquisition of third-party research and economic metrics to better communicate economic impact to media, industry and policymakers.
- Maintain a comparative reporting and benchmarking system for group sales, group booking pace and interactive analytics from media placement, social media outlets and VisitBuffaloNiagara.com. These measurements will be used for both internal and external analysis.
- Continue to seek out all Western New York regional partnerships with area organizations that can positively impact Buffalo Niagara visitation, make Western New York regionalism beyond our borders a standard practice.
- Continue to provide efficient, convenient, responsive and customer-oriented support services to the organization.
- Provide essential human resource functions to the organization.
- Safeguard Visit Buffalo Niagara's financial assets and manage its financial resources in accordance with the organizational by-laws.
- Provide contract compliance support services and centralized guidance to all Visit Buffalo Niagara departments related to contract planning, execution, performance and monitoring.
- Continue to reach out to elected officials, the business community, media and local residents to educate them on the economic value of tourism and the value of Visit Buffalo Niagara's efforts.
- Establish mechanisms for the development of alternative funding sources for Visit Buffalo Niagara by creating partnerships with local and national vendors specific to tourism economic development and visitation that assists in creating shared revenue channels beyond tax collection.
- Encourage Visit Buffalo Niagara staff to take leadership roles with local, state and national organizations to raise the level of professionalism and credibility of the organization.
- Continue work with economic development allies and city and county officials to ensure that VBN has input on strategies and plans for visitation and tourism-related projects in the City of Buffalo or Erie County. VBN will begin the development of a 2020 Tourism Master plan working with a tourism consulting firm to guide our community partners through a comprehensive plan beginning in 2019. This will be our destinations roadmap for the development of facilities, marketing strategies and comprehensive planning for the following ten years.
- Work with local, state and national organizations to monitor and actively voice our opinions or concerns relating to legislative issues that may impact Visit Buffalo Niagara or the tourism industry in general.

- Improve outreach and education to our local media outlets about the importance of tourism and the current trends in the Buffalo and Erie County market.
- Work with local, state and national officials and staff to address issues surrounding short-term housing rental programs. We will monitor and actively voice our opinions or concerns relating to these activities.
- Continue to facilitate committees or taskforce groups to address our various destination travel “drivers” to ensure we have a collaborative marketing message throughout Erie County. Continue our advocacy role within these committees on behalf of the partners, specific to community engagement and initiatives with our public stakeholders.
- Throughout the year, implement and engage the process to incorporate the 2015-2020 Visit Buffalo Niagara Strategic Plan.
- Work with Erie County municipalities to continue to identify and create the experiences that are authentic to our area to ensure we offer diverse, quality and appealing attractions, entertainment, shopping, arts/culture and culinary options.
- Continue to work at all visitor touchpoints to ensure they provide quality customer service and have a good understanding of our destination brand strategy and attributes countywide.
- Continue to support and have input on transportation issues that impact visitation, from expanding air service to improving modes of ground transportation throughout Erie County.
- Continue to work with county municipalities and events rights holders to identify new and existing, quality events that have economic value, generate trackable overnight visitation and enhance the destination brand and generate regional and national media exposure.
- VBN will implement strategies focused on destination opportunities and community support and engagement through the Destinations International DestinationNEXT study, including the process to complete a destination Visitor/Tourism Master Plan.
- Advance in the County’s pursuit regarding the future of the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.

Administrative Strategies

- Provide timely IT problem resolution and customer service to Visit Buffalo Niagara staff.
- Have a work environment that inspires employees through recognition and open communication.
- Ensure that administrative directives and policies are easily accessible and understood by staff.
- Oversee and monitor all expenditures of the organization to ensure operational budget is maximized.
- Provide timely financial reports to board members and other stakeholders to enhance the quality and efficiency by which financial services are delivered.
- Manage and coordinate the annual budget process including the revenue and expenditure forecasting.
- Administer all accounting functions to assure proper control and recording of financial transactions and compliance with fiscal policies.
- Continue to oversee the management and coordination of various contractual obligations for Visit Buffalo Niagara.
- Work in conjunction with Accounting and IT Departments to find the best software programs or technology environments that deliver the highest return-on-investment and efficiencies.

- Continue working with our elected county, city and town officials along with associated parties to ensure that the inter-local expenditures and opportunities are made on programs or infrastructure that will deliver the best ROI and address facilities that we do not currently have in our county-wide inventory.
- Serve in a proactive advise-and-consent role with local economic development partners on tourism-related projects
- Continue to conduct monthly speaking engagements with area civic groups, business roundtables and other volunteer organizations to promote tourism economic development and the VBN mission.
- Conduct community presentations to governmental/municipal, standing committees and departments, county based town councils and area chambers of commerce. Throughout the year, assign staff to cover various community events and to act as liaisons between Visit Buffalo Niagara and the host organizations.
- Work with area media and meet with their editorial staffs to educate them on the value of tourism programs that Visit Buffalo Niagara is involved with that have a positive impact for businesses and residents.
- Make sure that Visit Buffalo Niagara staff is involved with U.S. Travel Association, Brand USA, Destinations International, Empire State Development, New York State Hospitality and Travel Association, New York State Destination Marketing Organization as well as other national, state, regional and local associations to ensure that we have a voice on local, state, national and international issues impacting Buffalo Niagara tourism.
- Execute a multichannel strategy to address the need for more community support and engagement as outlined in Destinations International DestinationNEXT program. VBN will undertake tactics in training, town-hall meetings, task force and committee development, online resources and social media to the following areas: Backyard Boosters (residents and stakeholders), Bring It Home Campaign (connectors program for meetings and conventions) and Tourism Awareness (tourism industry partners).
- Advocate and advise for the future of the construction of new and/or expansion of existing Buffalo Niagara Convention Center, the organization's strengths of industry/planners expectations and standards, stakeholder resources and community outreach and education. Utilize integrated PR and marketing platforms and opportunities to raise awareness of the need and future use of a larger state of the art facility for Buffalo.

ADMINISTRATION ACTION CALENDAR	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
VBN Board Meeting	■			■			■			■		
VBN Executive Committee Meeting	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
VBN Finance/Audit Committee Meeting	■			■			■			■		
VBN Travel Pulse	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sports Advisory Council Meeting		■			■			■		■		
Quarterly Meeting with Erie County Executive		■			■			■			■	
Submit Preliminary Budget to Erie County								■				
Erie County VBN Funding Advisory Committee												
Erie County Convention Center Study Committee	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Quarterly Meeting with City of Buffalo Mayor	■			■			■			■		
Monthly Marketing Meeting with Seneca Gaming Corp.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
NYSDMO Meeting			■			■			■			■
NYSHTA Legislative Day			■									
US Travel Destination Council Board Meeting		■			■			■				■
US Travel Destination Capitol Hill			■									
US Travel ESTO								■				
Destinations International Annual Conference							■					
Submit DMAP Annual Report									■			
Buffalo Niagara Partnership CAN AM Meeting	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Quarterly Hotel General Managers Meeting		■			■			■			■	
Annual Audit			■									
Tourism Master Plan											■	
Destinations International DMO Compensation and Benefits Study		■										

Summary of Visit Buffalo Niagara Measurable Performance Objectives				
Organization Measure		2018 Goal	2018 Actual	2019 Goal
Administration				
1	Erie County Occupancy (STR projection)	63.40%		
2	Erie County Average Daily Rate (STR projection)	\$106.20		
3	Erie County RevPAR (STR projection)	\$67.34		
4	Erie County Hotel Tax Collection (Projection)	\$11,218,145		
5	Monthly Travel Pulse Distribution	12		
6	Marketing Grant Funds Received	\$50,000		
Marketing				
Digital				
8	Website Sessions	1,368,518		
9	Website Page Views	2,723,251		
10	Website Time on Page	1:37		
11	Email Consumer Database	105,000		
Social Media				
12	Facebook Fans	91,651		
13	Twitter Followers	27,319		
14	Instagram Followers	25,516		
15	Visit Buffalo Niagara Blog Posts	225		
Media Relations				
16	Media Placements – out-of-market	100		
17	Ad Equivalency Value	\$3,200,000		
18	Media Visits	40		
Sales				
Conventions				
19	Conventions Leads Distributed	288		
20	Conventions Definite Room Nights	61,590		
21	Conventions Definite Bookings	128		
22	Conventions Economic Impact	\$57,000,000		
23	Conventions Sales Calls	2,160		
24	Conventions Site Visits	30		
25	Conventions Tradeshows	14		
Sports				
26	Sports Leads Distributed	298		
27	Sports Definite Room Nights	89,370		
28	Sports Definite Bookings	161		
29	Sports Economic Impact	\$91,000,000		
30	Sports Sales Calls	1,532		
31	Sports Site Visits	30		
32	Sports Tradeshows	10		
Travel Industry				
33	Travel Industry Leads Distributed	185		
34	Travel Industry Definite Rm Nights	11,050		
35	Travel Industry Definite Bookings	145		

Organization Measure		2018 Goal	2018 Actual	2019 Goal
36	Travel Industry Economic Impact	\$4,200,000		
37	Travel Industry Sales Calls	720		
38	Travel Industry Site/FAM Visits	20		
39	Travel Industry Tradeshow	6		
Services				
40	Groups Serviced	200		
41	Completed Services Surveys	32		
42	Services Average Survey Score	4.5		
Destination Development Industry Relations				
43	Visitor Center Traffic	90,000		
44	Visitor Center Retail Sales	\$284,000		
45	Partner Database	4,110		
47	VBN Academy Programs	20		
48	VBN Beacon Awards table sales	\$14,000		
49	VBN Beacon Awards Attendance	570		
50	Tourism Insider Distribution	4		
51	Frontline Training	350		

Industry Membership and Leadership Positions

Patrick Kaler, President & CEO

- U.S. Travel Association, Board of Directors
- U.S. Travel Association, Destination Council Board of Directors
- U.S. Travel Association, Destination Council Chair
- U.S. Travel Association, PAC Board Member
- Destinations International
- New York Destination Marketing Organization Association, Vice Chair
- Buffalo Niagara Partnership Board of Directors
- Buffalo Civic Auto Ramp, Board of Directors
- Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin Complex, Board of Directors
- Olmsted Conservancy, Long Range Planning Committee
- The Eric Wood Foundation, Executive Advisory Board
- Member, Leadership Buffalo
- Western New York Sports Advisory Council

Drew Brown, Marketing Manager

- Reddy Bikeshare, Marketing Committee

Mike Even, Vice President of Sales and Services

- Destinations International Certified Destination Management Executive
- Trocaire College, Advisory Council for the Hospitality Management Program
- Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives, Board of Directors
- Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives, Programming Committee
- Chippewa Alliance Board of Directors
- Chippewa Alliance Street Scape Design Committee
- Destinations International Sales Advisory Committee
- Member, Meeting Planners International

Karen Fashana, Director of Marketing

- Darwin Martin House, Visitor Experience Committee
- Graycliff, Marketing Committee
- Theatre of Youth, Marketing Committee
- Buffalo Place, Marketing Committee

Jennifer Gregory, National Sales Manager

- American Planning Association Western New York Section, Scholarship Fundraiser
- Niagara University College of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Adjunct Instructor
- Professional Convention Managers Association, Capital Chapter
- Association of Meeting Professionals

Pete Harvey, Director of Sports Development

- NASC Sports Legacy Committee
- NASC By Laws Committee
- NASC Symposium Committee
- Wings Flights of Hope Board of Directors

Brian Hayden, Communications Manager

- Explore Buffalo Marketing Committee

Ed Healy, Vice President of Marketing

- Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship Advisory Council at SUNY Buffalo State
- Darwin Martin House Marketing Committee
- Gardens Buffalo Niagara Board of Directors

Cindy Kincaide, Director of Destination Development & Industry Relations

- Buffalo Green Fund, Inc. Past-President
- Community Advisory Board Member – WNED-TV
- Culinary Advisory Group Member – Erie 1 BOCES
- Member, Leadership Buffalo
- Maryvale Academy of Hospitality and Tourism Advisory Council
- Buffalo Place Retail Committee
- Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance Steering Committee

Jenilyn Mescall, National Sales Manager

- Meeting Planners International
- Buffalo Niagara Sales and Marketing Executives
- Buffalo Niagara Travel Professionals
- Events Industry Council Certified Meeting Planner

Leah Mueller, Director of Tourism Sales

- ILNY International Marketing Committee
- OMCA Supplier Council
- OMCA Conference Committee

Dionne Williamson, National Sales Director

- Friends of Broderick Park Committee
- Vision Niagara Board of Directors
- Buffalo History Museum Board of Managers
- Buffalo History Museum Advancement Committee
- UPward Design For Life Corporation - Founder